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TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Upcoming Bush-Sharon Meeting

[1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Maariv headlined: "Iran Is Approaching Nuclear Bomb."
The paper cited a senior military source as saying that it is a matter of months.

Yediot headlined that the U.S. plans to forward to Israel a disengagement grant in the sum of NIS 2 billion in order to build IDF bases.

Yediot reported that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon yesterday toured the areas of the western Negev intended for resettlement of evacuees from the Gaza Strip disengagement. During the tour, Sharon, who was accompanied by Disengagement Administration (Sela) head Yonatan Bassi, was quoted as telling those involved in the resettlement project to "start working."

Maariv reported that Mahmoud Abbas has delayed his planned tour to the U.S. and that there is no new date for his visit. The paper noted that the delay is due to lack of performance by the PA. Citing political sources in Jerusalem, Ha'aretz says the U.S. Administration is pressuring the PA to coordinate with Israel the handover of territories to be evacuated as part of the disengagement plan. The report goes on to say that Shimon Peres met PA's Muhammad Dahlan in Washington yesterday and the latter, speaking on behalf of PA Chairman Abu-Mazen, said the PA is willing to coordinate the disengagement. Peres later met Vice President Cheney and reported Dahlan's remarks to him. Foreign Minister Shalom met in Rome yesterday with his Italian counterpart who promised to raise the coordination issue in his meeting today with PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia.

Ha'aretz noted that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz plans to recommend to the government that it should revoke its earlier decision to destroy homes belonging to the settlers after the evacuation of the Gaza Strip. Maariv added that the settlers were furious to learn that their houses would not be destroyed and they are quoted as saying: "We will leave the Palestinians scorched land."

All leading media report that a Qassam rocket fired by Palestinian militants hit a cemetery in the Negev town of Sderot yesterday evening, causing no damage or injuries. Ha'aretz cites Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying the incident was "severe" and added that "Israel will not accept it." He demanded that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) do all he could to prevent further rocket attacks.

Israel Radio this morning reported that the U.S. has issued a new travel warning that urges its citizens to carefully consider future visits to Israel since they may serve as targets for terror attacks. Ha'aretz says the Israel Defense Forces and Israel Police have recently set up a special command to coordinate the activities of the select units that will take part in implementing the disengagement plan. The special command will be headed by Brigadier General Amos Ben-Avraham, who has extensive experience in

overseeing the operations of small, elite forces and currently heads the IDF's Leadership and High Command School.

Several media related that the Rabbis' Union for the People and Land of Israel, headed by former chief rabbis Mordechai Eliyahu and Avraham Shapira, yesterday reiterated its call to security forces to non-violently refuse orders to evacuate settlements under the disengagement plan.

Maariv carries an interview with PA's Jibril Rajub, who says that the Israelis "must understand that the era of exploding busses, restaurants, and cinemas is over. I am telling you, it is over and it's final."

1. Upcoming Bush-Sharon Meeting:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "In Israel, behind closed doors, officials are starting to take into account the 'day after' Iran becomes nuclear. The new deterrence policy, the nuclear Middle East. Unless the U.S. decides to take action."

Washington-based correspondent Orli Azulay-Katz writes in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The President feels that the Israeli Government is trying to fool him by offering an exaggerated commentary of his famous letter.... Yet, at the end of the day, after the cows go to sleep, both sides will be clear that America is committed to Israel, but Israel is committed not to build in the settlements."

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "The well-publicized smiles at the President's ranch will cover up a growing problem in relations between Israel and the United States. Senior officials in Jerusalem warned this week of what they described as 'clogging of the arteries' between the two countries."

Block Quotes:

1. "Iran"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (April 8): "Sharon will be treated in the presidential ranch with royal care. The hug will be sticky and strong. The real issues will be raised behind the curtains in Laura and George Bush's private house.... As of now, Ariel Sharon is on the right side.... The subjects that will be raised in the conversation are well known. Disengagement, coordinating it with the PA, Abu Mazen's situation (not good. The presidential envoy General Ward forwards pessimistic reports), the situation in Syria-Lebanon. The settlement issue will be concealed.... And then Bush and Sharon will reach the real issue. Iran. This is the truly important subject of the meeting next week in Texas.... And here are the news: updated intelligence estimations have shortened the schedule for an Iranian bomb. As of now, it is not a matter of years but of months.... in this pace, this upcoming fall someone will have to do something. That someone will not be Israel.... In Israel, behind closed doors, officials are starting to take into account the 'day after' Iran becomes nuclear. The new deterrence policy, the nuclear Middle East. Unless the U.S. decides to take action."

2. "Together, for the Cows"

Washington-based correspondent Orli Azulay-Katz writes in mass-circulation, pluralist Yedi'ot Aharonot (April 8): "The President feels that the Israeli Government is trying to fool him by offering an embellished commentary of his famous letter. 'Talk in the GOI about building in the settlements pushed the President's back against the wall,' one of his aides explained last week, 'and when his back is against the wall, Bush draws.' Indeed, in mid-last week, Bush made a dramatic statement that there would be no expansion of settlements because this conflicts with the road map. He thus signaled to Sharon that he better come to Texas with unequivocal data on the issue.. Furthermore, White House representatives and the Secretary of State made it repeatedly clear recently

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that there are major differences between Israel and the

U.S. concerning the fence route.. Even if the U.S. President pressures Sharon in their upcoming meeting, it would not be an Israeli-type of pressure. Bush will not let the dialogue deteriorate into a crisis, but the words will be spoken even if accompanied by a hearty smile. U.S. Presidential pressure on a friendly state is a pleasant act: silent, moderate, and pleasing to the ear. Yet, at the end of the day, after the cows go to sleep, both sides will be clear that America is committed to Israel, but Israel is committed not to build in the settlements."

13. "Clogging of the Arteries"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn opined in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (April 8): "The well-publicized smiles at the president's ranch will cover up a growing problem in relations between Israel and the United States. Senior officials in Jerusalem warned this week of what they described as 'clogging of the arteries' between the two countries.... The strategic dialogue at a senior level, which had been one of Sharon's achievements during his previous term, has not been held for two years now.... The channels for security communication are stuck because of the disagreement about the sale of Israeli weapons to China, which is casting a shadow on relations between the Pentagon and the Defense Ministry.... The senior officials warn that good dialogue between leaders is not enough, ... that it is important to hold frequent meetings at the working level as well, in order to create personal chemistry and understanding, the importance of which is crucial in crisis situations. But Sharon will not have time to deal with this on the upcoming visit. Perhaps he will find the time after the disengagement."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Failure to thwart an act of Jewish terror or a mass provocation at this critical stage will show that Israel's democratic regime has not learned a lesson from the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, or from the affair of the Jewish underground that also had plans 'to cleanse the Temple Mount.' Meanwhile there are no signs in the conduct of the army or the police indicating that they are taking the Jewish troublemakers with sufficient seriousness."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The state of the settlers has only one goal, perpetuation of the occupation and domination of the Palestinian people; in other words, the war with the Palestinians will continue." Nationalist Hatzofe editorialized: "As of now, Washington is the one to dictate Jerusalem's policy, even if 'for internal matters', Sharon tries to act differently."

Block Quotes:

11. "Who Will Light the Match"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 8): "As most of the residents of Gush Katif are not violent and will apparently agree to leave their homes, the Shin Bet is extremely apprehensive about the possibility that extremists in that camp will take pains to disrupt the agreement. Extreme right-wing circles assume that it will still be possible to prevent the pullout through an act or acts that will shock the entire region. There are people like that all over the country, and their strength lies in their morally unmitigated determination. All the security experience and know-how that Israel has accumulated, and in which it has invested billions, now has to be mobilized to prevent this scenario from coming to fruition. Failure to thwart an act of Jewish terror or a mass provocation at this critical stage will show that Israel's democratic regime has not learned a lesson from the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, or from the affair of the Jewish underground that also had plans 'to cleanse the Temple Mount.' Meanwhile there are no signs in the conduct of the army or the police indicating that they are taking the Jewish troublemakers with sufficient seriousness. Ten-year-olds are able to interfere with the activities of army

and police detachments, to break the limbs of policemen and to make the lives of Palestinians miserable - and other than brief revolving-door arrests, the attitude toward them has been one merely of inexplicable leniency rather than a firmer-than-usual hand."

[12.](#) "Two States, One Nation"

Diplomatic pundit Ze'ev Schiff writes in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 8): "The events in the Gaza Strip are liable to deteriorate into an overall violent conflict between two Jewish states with different goals. One is the State of Israel, and the other is the state of the settlers. Despite the profound ties between them, each of them feels threatened by the other.. For a long time, the settlers have been behaving as though the State of Israel were a foreign government, as was the British Mandate in its day. They take what they can from the government, take over property and lands insofar as possible, and ignore what is inconvenient for them. The fear of those in charge of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's security today vis--vis the right-wing extremists is greater than their fear of Palestinian assassins.. The argument that, in their struggle against the disengagement, the settlers are trying to save democracy in Israel by means of a national referendum is false. The state of the settlers has only one goal, perpetuation of the occupation and domination of the Palestinian people; in other words, the war with the Palestinians will continue, and if the settlers actually harm Islamic holy sites it will be a world war with the Islamic world, and an irreparable rift with the Arab community in Israel."

[13.](#) "Two Voices"

Nationalist Hatzofe editorialized (April 8): "The Prime Minister, as always, speaks in two voices -- one for internal needs ... and the other for the U.S., the State Department and the White House. This fact was obvious one more time following his statement relating to the territorial contiguity between Ma'ale Edumim and Jerusalem.... This could be a blessed plan, if the PM did not hurry to clarify to Washington that his declaration ... 'was only for internal needs.'.... As of now, Washington is the one to dictate Jerusalem's policy, even if 'for internal matters', Sharon tries to act differently."

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